

# Fentanyl sublingual tablets (Abstral<sup>®</sup>)

## What are fentanyl sublingual tablets used for?

Abstral® is a strong opioid painkiller that is put under the tongue. It dissolves and works very quickly. It is used to treat the kind of moderate to severe pain that comes on suddenly without warning or is brought on by movement or something like changing a dressing. This kind of pain usually lasts for a short time so a painkiller like fentanyl can help. If you know what brings your pain on, you can use the tablet in advance to prevent pain.

## Why have I been given fentanyl sublingual tablets for my pain?

Fentanyl tablets are used to help manage pain that comes on suddenly in people who are already taking a regular strong pain killer to control their pain.

## How do I use the fentanyl tablet?

The fentanyl tablet will work best if you take it as soon as the pain starts to come on or just before you do something that gives you pain.

- If your mouth is dry, take a sip of water first and swallow it or spit it out
- Peel back the foil in the blister pack and remove one tablet. Do not try to push the tablet through the foil or split it
- Put the tablet under the tongue as far back as you can
- Let it dissolve completely; do not bite, suck or swallow the tablet
- Do not eat or drink anything until the tablet has completely dissolved.

## What dose will I be on?

The dose prescribed by your doctor depends on your pain. You may be started on 1 or 2 tablets of the lowest dose of fentanyl tablet for an attack of pain. The dose can be increased if your doctor or nurse decides this will help.

## When do I take it?

Your doctor or nurse will explain how to use the fentanyl tablets and when to take them. This will depend on your pain. The fentanyl tablet will work best if you take it as soon as the pain starts to come on or just before you do something that gives you pain.

Some people only need to use the fentanyl tablet occasionally. Others may need to use it more often. It is important to follow the advice given by your doctor or nurse.

- After taking a dose of the fentanyl tablet, you should wait for at least 2 hours before using the fentanyl tablets to treat another episode of pain
- You must not use the fentanyl tablets for more than 4 episodes of pain in a 24 hour period
- It is useful to keep a note of when you take a tablet and how well it works.

## How long will it take to work?

Fentanyl passes quickly through the moist skin in the mouth into the blood stream. Most people get pain relief within 5-10 minutes and the effect lasts for about 30-60 minutes.

## Will the fentanyl tablet always relieve my pain completely?

Although a fentanyl tablet is a very good pain killer, it is not helpful for all types of pain. Other treatments may be suggested by your doctor or nurse. Your doctor will give you another short acting pain killer that you can take if the fentanyl tablet does not control your pain or you need to wait before it is safe to take another dose of the fentanyl tablet.

## What do I do if the pain gets worse or more frequent?

If you need to use the fentanyl tablets much more often than usual or they are not working, ask your doctor or nurse for advice.

## Are there any side effects from fentanyl tablets?

### **Some people feel unwell in one or more of these ways:**

- Feeling drowsy or dizzy - this usually wears off quickly. If you are more sleepy or muddled than usual, contact your doctor or nurse.
- Feeling sick most of the time
- Restlessness or jumpiness
- Dry mouth - make sure that you brush your teeth regularly. Keeping your lips moistened with lip salve or an oral gel may help. Regular small sips of water help too.

- Speak to your doctor or nurse if these side effects are a problem for you or if you have any worries about the fentanyl tablets.

## Can I drive?

We advise you not to drive after taking fentanyl tablets as they work quickly and are likely to make you feel drowsy.

## Can I drink alcohol?

Fentanyl tablets can make you drowsy so you should not take alcohol when you are using this medicine.

## What happens if I swallow the fentanyl tablet?

It is not dangerous to swallow the tablet, but it will not work so well for your pain.

## Will it interfere with my other medicines?

Fentanyl tablets will normally be used along with other medicines, especially other pain killers. Please make sure that you tell any doctor, nurse or pharmacist who is caring for you that you are using fentanyl tablets. Do not drink grapefruit juice while you are using fentanyl tablets; it can increase the risk of side effects.

## Can I get the fentanyl tablets from my GP and local pharmacy?

Yes - a specialist doctor or nurse will usually suggest that you try fentanyl tablets for your pain. Information will be sent to your GP and pharmacist so that the medicine can be prescribed and ordered for you.

## Where should I store the fentanyl tablets?

The fentanyl tablets contain a strong pain killer and must be stored at room temperature and kept safely out of the reach of children.

Any tablets that are not used should be taken back to the pharmacy.

Discuss this leaflet with your doctor or nurse who can answer any questions you have and who will tell you who to contact if you have problems using the fentanyl tablets.

## Any questions?

If you have any questions about your fentanyl or other medicines, please ask your community nurse, GP or community palliative care nurse, if you have one.



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**Disclaimer**

The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is in no way intended to replace professional clinical advice by a qualified practitioner.

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